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DRAPIER'S ADDRESS

TO THE

GOOD PEOPLE of ENGLAND, &c.



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DRAPER'S ADDRESS

TO THE



GOOD PRACTICE IN ENGLAND

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D R A P I E R ' s  
A D D R E S S  
TO THE  
G O O D P E O P L E  
O F  
E N G L A N D,  
Upon the CAUSES of the  
P R E S E N T D E A R N E S S  
O F

P R O V I S I O N S, &c.

*By Rev. Atcherley, Master of Shrewsbury School,  
& formerly of Magdalen Coll. Cambridge.*

L O N D O N :

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A  
DRESS  
DRAPIER'S

TO THE

GOOD PEOPLE

OF  
ENGLAND

Open House of the



PRESS

OF

PROVISIONS, &c.

LONDON

Printed for T. Bohn, in New-Street,

in opposition

to the





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## DRAPIER'S ADDRESS, &c.

GOOD PEOPLE.

I was much alarmed and amazed, when I read in the publick prints some extracts from the examination of Mr. Smyth and Mr. Farrow, before the House of Commons, upon the present high price of grain, and upon the distillery. I have no personal knowledge of either, consequently I can have no private resentment to gratify. After I had read and considered their account, I cannot say but I was very much dissatisfied with it. If that which I saw were authentic, every assertion and every conclusion or inference, which they would draw from thence, have very much the appearance of falshood; and therefore we have reason to fear (from the great attention which has been paid to their

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narrations) that the great council of the nation is likely to become the dupe of ignorant or designing men. Mr. Smyth hath asserted, " that the dearness of corn is owing to the failure of the crops; and that, for these last seven years, the crops have been lighter than usual." By this expression I understand him to mean, that the gross quantity of grain is smaller; otherwise what he has said amounts to nothing. I must suppose Mr. Smyth to mean, the crops within the kingdom of England; and that he does not include any of those foreign states which are supplied with corn from hence. There is certainly great reason to call upon Mr. Smyth for some further proof of this assertion than a mere *ipse dixi*, because although we admit the consequence, *viz.* that corn has been dearer than usual within these last seven years, yet the cause of that dearness may be accounted for upon other principles. A perusal of the following pages may, perhaps, incline you to believe that Mr. Smyth has been rash and unguarded in this assertion. However, if I had not had good reason to call Mr. Smyth's veracity in question in other parts of his narration, I might perhaps have been

been induced to give some little credit to his account of the smallness of the crops, as I must suppose he has made some sort of calculation, and as I have not made any survey in the different parts of the kingdom, and as I have not seen any accurate or authentic returns of the quantities of grain produced from different parts.

But a reason presents itself to me, against Mr. Smyth's assertion, which, in my opinion, invalidates what he has said, and, at the same time, may draw us somewhat nearer to one real cause of the evil. Let us see how his reasoning stands. — The crops have been lighter than usual for these last seven years, says Mr. Smyth. — The land has, in general, been much advanced throughout the kingdom, during these last seven years, say I. And I further say, that the generality of farmers never got money so fast as they have done of late years. The crops are smaller; — the land is dearer; — the farmers grow rich. Is not this a sort of confutation of Mr. Smyth's assertion? And does it not direct us to search into some further cause?

Most of the lands about this neighbourhood have been raised within these few years

near one third of their former rent. Now if the rise of lands in other parts of the kingdom be nearly in the same proportion as in this, the farmer ought to sell every kind of produce one third dearer than he did formerly, to enable him to live as he did before the rise of land; supposing the crops to be equal. But for these last seven years, *grain* hath not been one third part above the usual price;—above the mean price, as it hath been fixed by the act of parliament for the bounty on exportation of corn. If this which I have just stated be a fact, there is reason to presume that the quantity of grain gotten within these few years, hath exceeded rather than fallen short of what was gotten in former years.

I do not pretend to assert this as a certain fact; nor do I believe, that the crops have been heavier, but that they have been lighter than usual; and yet the general quantity of grain may possibly be as great, or greater, than in former years. And this, I think, may be accounted for, upon a principle which has not yet been regarded.

I apprehend, that a far greater number of acres have been sown of late years, than what were



were annually sown in former times ; so that although the produce of several lands, taken separately, may be less, yet the gross produce of the whole may be greater. The high price of grain may have induced the farmer to break up land, which had usually been occupied and employed otherwise : and a great deal of this land, thus recently converted to tillage, may be such as would be more liable to be affected, by casualty or uncertain seasons, than the land usually tilled by our forefathers. If this be really the case, it will likewise account for the dearth of butter and cheese, and butcher's meat. The greater quantity of land is employed in tillage, the less will be left for these other purposes : the less quantity of land will be left for the feeding of cattle ; for the feeding of sheep, and for the making of butter and cheese ; consequently, all these articles may be expected to be advanced in price. Besides, much common and waste ground hath of late been inclosed ; with what policy will probably appear more plainly hereafter than it doth at present. All this land, for some years at least after inclosure, hath of course been occupied in tillage, and  
hath



hath been afterwards so employed, according to the present mode and course of husbandry. This alone must have occasioned much more land to be sown lately than formerly. So that, upon the whole, I think there is, at least, great reason to conjecture, that the present dearth of corn doth not arise from the want of corn. If so, the cause assigned by Mr. Smyth, before the House of Commons, will fall to the ground; and it will be time for the legislature to direct their enquiries another way.

It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that it may be more easy to prove what is not, than what is, the cause of the dearth of grain. These conclusions however, no less true than they are deplorable, may, I think, be fairly drawn from what I have advanced, viz. that the dearth of corn doth not arise from the want of it; and that whatever the cause of this dearth may be, it is likely to operate uniformly and constantly upon us, until it be investigated, and some proper remedy be applied.

It may, perhaps, be presumption in me, who am far removed from the springs of government, and conscious to myself that my  
abilities

abilities are by no means exalted above the common standard; it may be presumption in me, to attempt the assigning of any cause, or causes of the dearness of provisions, or of the distresses of the poor inhabitants of this land. But as I have already ventured upon a leading hint or two, and as I often consider this matter, and am as often affected at it, I cannot withstand that propensity which I feel in myself, to go a little farther into it. And, if my conjectures herein should be found to be wrong, or of no importance, I flatter myself, that the integrity of my intention will be admitted, as a sufficient apology for this attempt.

If I may be permitted then to offer my sentiments, I do verily believe, that one of the greatest contributing causes of the dearness of provisions is, the abolition of small farms. In this part of the kingdom, such villages as were formerly divided into eight or ten farms, are now commonly reduced to two or three. The landed gentlemen have thought it advantageous to have but a few buildings upon their estates; and that their rents would be much more easily and safely collected from a few great and opulent farmers, than  
from

from a greater number of persons who, on account of the smallness of their tenements, must be supposed to be in lower circumstances. If this had had no influence upon the community, the landlords would have judged rightly. But I am afraid, that in the event, it hath proved otherwise. The farmers, as their undertakings have been enlarged, have had the means of greater gains: they have become wealthy; the landed gentlemen have observed this, and have concluded, that if their tenants got money so very fast, they could afford to pay a greater rent for their land. Accordingly the land hath been raised, as I have observed before, about one third. Supposing the crops to be, upon an average, as usual; and supposing the farmers to be obliged to sell their grain in the publick market, for *home consumption only*, at such price as they could get for it, in order to pay their rents, I cannot see that the largeness of the farms would be any inconvenience to the generality of the buyers of corn, if we consider the matter in that point of view only, without regard to its consequences in other respects. But these people are now, most of them, grown rich, and are able

to

to pay their rents without selling their grain for that purpose; and therefore they will produce it only as they can sell it to advantage. There may be, and there certainly are, several other causes co-operating with this; but I apprehend that this is the principal immediate cause, and of itself, in a great measure, adequate to the effect.

Now, if this be the real state of the case, the most lamentable consideration is, that it is likely to be permanent: without the interposition of some very great power and influence, perhaps nothing less than parliament itself, it will continually operate upon us. We stand but little chance of ever seeing cheapness, though there be plenty: there is little prospect, that even the industrious poor will ever more wear the smiles of content, in this once happy, and still fruitful, land.

As to Mr. Smyth's assertion, "that more wheat is now eaten than formerly," let those believe it who choose to do so. I for my part do not. If there be not so much barley bread eaten now, as was formerly, I apprehend, that deficiency is amply



accounted for by the vast increase in the consumption of potatoes and rice.

If Mr. Smyth have formed his estimate of the average of various kinds of grain from the number of acres sown, he must have erred very greatly according to his own account. We are told, that he has rated the produce of an acre of wheat at twenty four bushels, of barley at forty eight bushels, and of oats at sixty four. Now if he had taken the number of acres sown with any accuracy, he must have erred more than half, as to the quantity produced. According to his account, a crop of barley will be worth more to the farmer than a crop of wheat : and according to his present average price of barley, a farmer would receive from an hundred acres sown with barley upwards of 900 l. or more than 9 l. per acre. There is no doubt but the farmers (as fast as they get money) would be glad to take up with half that sum for the produce of every acre.

The report of Mr. Smyth and Mr. Farrow about the quantity of grain, and the dearth, as the consequence of the smallness of the quantity, appears to be very ill founded.



founded. They are certainly either unequal to the task of framing any tolerable calculation, or probable conjecture, or they have taken no pains to get information; or else they are bad men, and come forward with a determined resolution to mislead the most honourable members of the House of Commons, and impose upon the nation. I have charity enough to acquit them of this last charge; and am rather inclined to ascribe their erroneous reports to either of the other causes, or both.

But as the prohibition of the use of grain in the stills, or the allowing of it to be so used, seems to have turned in some measure upon their report, it may be proper to examine this application of, or inference from, their positions, a little more distinctly.

We are told, Lord N—— hath publicly declared, that of the 500,000 l. per ann. brought in to government, from the distillery, 450,000 l. arises from grain distilled. This right hon. gentleman is a person of a most respectable character indeed: his veracity is equal to his abilities, and his abilities are equal to any thing which human nature is capable of attaining. We must

therefore believe Lord N—— when he assures us, that 450,000 l. per ann. is brought into the publick treasury, from the duty on spirits distilled from grain. Mr. Smyth and Mr. Farrow, have told the Committee of the House of Commons, that the quantity of grain distilled does not exceed, from 135,000, to 150,000 quarters.

Let us now see, whether the quantity of grain, reported by Mr. Smyth and Mr. Farrow to be distilled, will produce a duty equal to 450,000 l. which is the sum, said to be mentioned by Lord N—— as annually received from that article.

From the best information which I have been able to obtain, the quantity of spirit upon an average, extracted from a quarter of malt distilled, will not exceed eleven gallons. If we compare the price of malt, the duty upon spirits, and the price of spirits together, it seems as if a larger quantity of spirit than this ought to be distilled.—I only mention the fact, in as accurate and authentic a manner as I have been able to obtain it. This is one of the mysteries of the distilling business. However, I have been told, that malt is never distilled by itself; but that it

is

is used as a mixture, to separate the sundry particles of raw flower, or other ingredients, which either pay no duty, or which are purchased at a much lower price. I am told likewise, that the duty upon British spirits is paid only according to the quantity distilled, and not according to the proof; and in this case, we may be sure, the spirit is distilled far above proof, in order to be gauged by the exciseman, and lowered afterwards for sale.

From the best information then, which I have been able to obtain, the quantity of such spirit as will be charged with the duty of 3 s. 4 d. per gallon, extracted from a quarter of malt distilled, does not, upon an average, exceed eleven gallons.

Upon this medium, the duty arising from 143,000 quarters of malt, which is rather more than the mean, between the two quantities mentioned by Mr. Smyth to be used by the distillers, will be 262,166 l. 13 s. 4 d. supposing government to be paid the full duty for all that is distilled; but the frequent informations that are laid against distillers for frauds, and the repeated acts of parliament which have been passed, for the  
better

better securing of the payment of that branch of the revenue, afford great reason to suspect, that a much larger quantity of grain is thus used, than what can be accounted for by the duty.

The gross produce of last year's crop of barley, is estimated by Mr. Smyth, at 4,600,000 quarters; one sixth part, at least, of this will be wanted for seed. This will amount to 766,666 quarters, and somewhat more; so that the remainder will be 3,833,334 quarters; but even this quantity will not all come to market. Some will be devoured by birds and vermin; some by domestic poultry; some is frequently given in the straw to Horses; and a great deal of the light and fliggy grain is kept at home for swine and other uses. Now, if we suppose one fifteenth part of the 3,833,334 quarters to be thus wasted and consumed, the remainder will be 3,807,779 quarters of grain for market.

It is true, this kind of loss or waste, is not peculiar to the present time. The reason for which I mentioned it is, in order to form some sort of estimate of the quantity of barley left for sale; allowing Mr. Smyth to have



have erred somewhat more in the number of acres, than he has in the quantity produced from an acre; and that on balancing these erroneous accounts, the quantity should be as he has said, 4,600,000 quarters. In most of these articles, which reduce the gross quantity by loss or waste, it is impossible to judge by any certain or tolerable rule, if we take them singly; but if we take them together, I believe we may come pretty near the truth. A farmer, when he hath gotten in his harvest, may be able to guess nearly, as to the quantity of barley he may expect from an acre. He will know how much he sells, and how much he keeps for seed; consequently, he will be able to guess how much is wasted or consumed at home. If I have not overrated these articles, but have allowed as much as may be fairly supposed to be left for sale, then the quantity of 245,455 quarters, (for this is the quantity necessary to produce a duty of 450,000 l. and not 143,000 quarters, according to Mr. Smyth) is almost one fifteenth part of the whole year's produce, which will be exposed to sale. And, whether the deduction of one fifteenth part of the produce will not affect the price  
of



of the remainder, more than six-pence per quarter, may easily be determined by any man of a common understanding.

The only reasonable objection, which can be made to a total prohibition of the use of all kinds of grain in the distillery, is that urged by Lord N—— (viz.) the loss which the public revenue would receive thereby. I would, with all submission, refer it to that right hon. gentleman, whether he does not imagine, that, in this case, the distillers would strike out some other succedaneum instead of grain, which may be less necessary, than that is, for the support of life. However, if that should prove not to be altogether the case; and the public revenues should suffer a little, his lordship would feel that satisfaction of mind, which must fall to the lot of every honest man, who hath been instrumental in saving multitudes of his fellow-creatures from death and destruction. He would have the further satisfaction to reflect, that this very deficiency would stand a fair chance of being made up within a few years, by an increase in the number of the people, and of course, an increase of the ale, and other revenues.

But

But if the exigencies of state require the duty upon spirits, and that duty cannot be made up without a permission to distil malt, provided the legislature can, and will, take such measures, as will reduce the price of the different sorts of grain, and afford a fair prospect of a continuance of cheapness, the distilling of grain, may after some time be permitted again, with less inconvenience and injury, than at present, to that part of the community, who do not choose to become their own executioners.

But when I mentioned the largeness of the farms, and the opulence of the farmers, and the rise of lands, as the causes of the dearth of provisions; I would be understood to mean only the immediate causes, which directly affect us. It may indeed be very reasonably asked, How came the farmers to be so desirous of monopolizing farms? and, supposing them to be desirous of so doing, how came they to be of ability to occupy farms, so very much larger than those, which the generality of them occupied before? There must certainly be some motive—some prior moving cause, which must have contributed to this unhappy change in the business

of farming. This, I apprehend to be no other than the bounty upon the exportation of corn.

Some time about the year 1752, corn was very cheap. Lord T—— Lord O—— Lord L—— and several other gentlemen, in Norfolk, and Suffolk, and the other corn counties, the estates of whom depended much upon tillage, were told by their tenants, that the only way to have their rents well paid, and to make the farmers flourish, would be to obtain a publick encouragement upon that mode of agriculture. Lord T—— who was upon the best terms with the ministry at that time, took the lead in the affair. By the interest of this gentleman and others, whose estates would be particularly benefited; an act of parliament was obtained or rather revived, by which government engaged to pay six-pence per bushel for all corn, which should be exported, whensoever wheat should be under five-shillings per bushel. This six-pence per bushel was, at that time, a full sixth part of the value of the wheat.

Under this encouragement, abundance of corn was sown; abundance was sent abroad; and money returned fast into the farmer's hands:

hands: farms were soon made much larger, and greatly raised: both landlord and tenant still found their account: the trade was looked upon with pleasure: but behold the consequence! — The corn-merchants, eager to obtain the reward proposed by law, hastily contracted with the farmers for all the corn which they could spare: it was shipped off, and lodged in foreign store-houses. This baneful allurements of six-pence per bushel, drained off a considerable part of the harvest early in the winter. Corn rose in price greatly at home, in proportion as the stock in hand was diminished. The poor cried out for bread, and the factors, or merchants, were *graciously pleased* to import the same corn, (perhaps at forty per cent. advance) in order *to relieve the distresses of their fellow-creatures.*

These, I believe, upon the strictest enquiry, will be found to be undeniable facts; and if so, they may serve as a clew, which may help us to unravel this whole mystery of the dearth of provisions. The physician's adage, "to know the disorder is half the cure," is certainly verified in this case.



If the legislature know the cause, they will have the remedy in their own hands.

Indeed a remedy may arise out of the evil itself; not in this generation, but in the next it is more than probable. It is, however, such a remedy, as at the same time must be our ruin: I mean depopulation. Depopulation must be the consequence of an over-extensive tillage, especially in the hands of very great farmers.

But as I have mentioned this, I cannot forbear going a little farther than I at first intended, when I sat down to write these observations, in order to consider a little more distinctly, the policy of government in encouraging this sort of corn trade which I have mentioned.

There is an old observation, as old as society itself, trite enough we must acknowledge, but nevertheless strictly true, — “ that a great number of industrious poor are a greater benefit and advantage to the state in which they live, than a small number of people, however opulent they may be; or, in other words, that the multitude of the people are the riches of the prince. Let



us now see how this scheme of the bounty upon corn exported, which, after having been by law repealed, as injurious to the nation, was again revived and encouraged about twenty one years ago; let us see, I say, how this bounty-scheme agrees with the maxim I have now laid down.

According to this, whatsoever business or manufactory employs the greatest number of hands, is most beneficial to the community, and *vice versa*.

Now the woollen manufacture, which our wise ancestors encouraged, and considered as the staple of the kingdom, appears to be admirably calculated for the employment of a multitude of industrious poor. The various changes which the wool undergoes, from the time it is shorn, until it is packed up in bales of broad-cloth, employs such a number of poor people, as can hardly be conceived by any, except those persons who are conversant with the various branches of that manufactory.

The broad-cloth trade is now very much upon the decline: the quantity of that commodity now made, is not near so great as formerly. Many of the weavers, and other manu-

manufacturers, together with their families, are starving for want of employment. That land, which was usually depastured by small sheep bearing wool of a fine staple, is now *improved*, as the farmers term it, and converted to tillage; so that the quantity of wool, proper for that purpose, must be greatly diminished.

I have before spoken of the inclosing of commons, wastes, and heath grounds, as one cause contributing to the dearth of provisions: and, as I am now speaking of depopulation, I must beg leave to enter somewhat more largely into this, which is certainly one of the worst and greatest causes of depopulation, which infatuation or cruelty could have devised. I own my indignation rises to a degree bordering upon excess, when, in these *halcyon* days of improvement, I behold an overgrown farmer casting up his trenches round a large waste, and driving his plough through those ancient sheep pastures. One single farmer, with one single family, monopolizes and cultivates a tract of land, which before maintained a great number of sheep, whose covering found employment for many families throughout the year.

Besides

Besides, the poorer sort of people, day-labourers and others, have at all times chosen to fix themselves by the sides of commons, on account of the many little helps and advantages, which must necessarily arise to them from such situations; and which have contributed, not a little, to keep them from being burthenfome to their richer neighbours. That little spot before their doors, upon which their poultry wandered, their goose led her young flock, upon which their two or three sheep grazed, whose wool, by the housewifery and industry of the poor but fond mother, helped to keep off the chilling colds of wintry blasts from her dear little ones, is now monopolized by an overbearing, furly farmer, who draws his boundaries close to their doors, and harasses them for every the least act of trespass which they may commit. They behold with sorrow, corn before their doors;—corn which is none of theirs, and, what is worse, of which they cannot honestly earn money sufficient to purchase as much as they absolutely want to preserve themselves and their families from starving.

The lord of the manor likewise bears a part, and a very considerable part too, in  
this

this sort of depopulation. As soon as a common is enclosed, the poor cottagers are all served with notice to quit. The utmost indulgence is a lease for a term not exceeding the lives of the present possessors; and their children or successors must be turned out, or become rack tenants, at the option of the lord of the manor. But, if they are unable to support themselves now, what must become of them, when a considerable rent is to be paid for their sorry dwellings, to the lord of a manor, who probably does not want it; and, if he do, will be but little benefited by such a sum as he would be able thus to extort from these unhappy wretches; especially if they happen to live in the same neighbourhood? If these poor people be a burthen, I think the next generation stands fair for getting rid of this burthen. It cannot be expected, that they will be very desirous of marrying and begetting children, with such a prospect as this before their eyes; or if they should have children, these children must be either starved at home, or else they must emigrate, in hopes of bettering their condition abroad. This is depopulation with a vengeance, and certainly requires



quires a more serious attention, than that which has hitherto been paid it.

I know it has been usually urged, that commons, when inclosed, will maintain all kinds of cattle, and more sheep than when they were in their uninclosed state. This I readily grant; but although I should allow, that they would maintain as many sheep as can stand upon them, yet I must deny that these sheep will be of any service to the manufactory of woollen broad-cloth. The rankness of the land occasions the sheep to grow to a larger size: the wool becomes longer and coarser; so that although it may very well answer the purpose of making jersey, or the coarsest kind of cloth, it will not serve to make that sort of cloth, which has been the great support of the woollen trade of this nation.

I have frequently seen, in news papers and other periodical prints, productions filled with complaints about the present high price of corn, and depopulation; and they have many of them argued from a principle directly contrary to that upon which I have proceeded. They complain of too extensive grazing; — that a great deal of the land, which

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was formerly used in tillage, is now converted to that purpose; and that, consequently, less corn is gotten, and fewer hands are employed than formerly.

All ingenuous attempts to investigate the causes of a general calamity are laudable and meritorious, however unsuccessful they may be. I readily acknowledge, that a great number of acres have been inclosed from the open fields in the corn-countries; and that the greatest part of that land has been used for the purpose of grazing; but still I am convinced, that these persons reason upon false grounds. This conviction arises partly from observation: but, as I have not gone through all counties, and in all directions, it is certain that no argument drawn from thence can be conclusive. I have, however, passed through several different parts of the kingdom, and through many of the corn-countries: and from such rough and inaccurate conjectures, as I have been able to form from transient views, I have inclined to believe, that the quantity of land lately converted to tillage, very far exceeds the tillable land lately converted to grazing. If I had had nothing more than this sort of  
imperfect

imperfect, ocular survey to determine my judgment, I should readily have given up my opinion to that of any understanding, sensible man, who may have made more accurate observations.

But what has caused me totally to explode this notion of the increase of pasture, and of depopulation, as a consequence of such increase, is the following consideration. — Without the intervention of exterior causes, and *cæteris paribus*, tillage and grazing, or pasturage, ought in this case, to be a counterpoise to each other. The greater the quantity of land (supposing the whole of the land to be a given quantity) used in tillage, the less quantity must be used in grazing. Fewer cattle in this case would be fed; and consequently, they ought to be, by so much the dearer, by how much the less land is appropriated to that purpose; and corn ought to be cheaper in the same proportion. On the contrary, by how much the more land is taken from tillage, and applied to the purpose of grazing or feeding cattle, by so much the greater number of cattle will be fed; and consequently, they ought to be in the same proportion, *inverted*, cheap-

er, and corn to be dearer: but this is not the case. Fat cattle have been advanced in price, at least as much as grain; and both have been dear at the same time: so that the argument must be of no weight, especially on that side of the question on which it has been urged.

Some, I find, have laid great stress upon the luxury of the present times, and readily suppose, that the present dearthness of provisions is, in great measure, owing to that profusion; but I cannot see how this can affect the case before us, unless men's appetites be larger now than they were in former times. I readily grant, that the general way of living is much altered; but I can by no means think, that this causes an increase in the consumption of the necessaries of life. Many of the dishes, which are laid upon the tables of the great, are made up of exotics; and some of them, such as were entirely unknown in the days of our fore-fathers: and they are in general served up with so high a *gout*, that they tend to vitiate the stomach rather than increase the appetite. The fragments are seldom or never lost. Gentlemen's servants affect the quality  
of



of their masters and mistresses; and the broken meat is commonly bestowed upon poor hangers-on, as a reward for performing the meanest offices, and for doing the most laborious part of each servant's employment. Although these poor people were not fed thus, yet they must eat. So that, if we except the single article of butter, I do not believe, that any of the necessaries of life are the more consumed, on account of the alteration in the general way of living.

A short treatise was published about three or four years ago, upon the present high price of provisions, said to be written by a very learned and ingenious gentleman,\* who is himself a member of the House of Commons. The author seems to be actuated by a principle of humanity and feeling for the distresses of his fellow subjects. Several causes of the dearness of provisions are assigned by this gentleman; but they are such as, taken together, I must, with all deference, suppose to be inadequate to the effect.

One of the causes mentioned by him, is the increase of taxes. This cause is indeed well founded, and must operate as far as it

\* Soame Jenyns, Esq;

it can go. But the increase of taxes, within these last twenty years, added to the gross price of all kinds of provisions, will bear but a small proportion to the rise of them within that period.

Another reason assigned in this treatise, is the great number of vast fortunes which have been made of late years, and the decrease in the value of money, upon that account. Many persons have certainly acquired large fortunes, within these few years, by the wars and by other means; but as these persons cannot be supposed to eat any more than they did before, I cannot think that the quantity of real necessaries is any the more consumed upon that account.

As to the decrease in the value of money, if we compare the present time with the fifteenth or sixteenth century, or even with the times about fifty or sixty years ago, it must be acknowledged, that the value of money is decreased; but, whether money be less valuable now, than it was twenty years ago, I think, is very doubtful. It is true, the publick funds have been much swelled; and the increase of private property there is prodigious: but the effect of this sort of artificial

artificial currency, upon the real value of money, or the price of provisions, may open the way to a debate, to which I am afraid I am unequal; upon which, at least, I do not choose to enter. This, however, is certain: the interest of money, in private hands, is as high as it was twenty years ago. From the height of the interest a fair argument may be drawn, to evince the scarceness; and the value, I apprehend, will always be as the scarceness.

However, although we should allow the force of the argument, taken from the fortunes which have been lately acquired, and that the great increase in the number of rich men may have decreased the value of money, I think it is a question, whether the whole of the fortunes gotten by farming, do not far exceed those gotten by all other ways whatsoever.

It may possibly be objected to my scheme, that it tends to the ruin of the farmers. I should be sorry to be considered, as devising or wishing the ruin of any man, or of any body of men, whatsoever; but I must own, that (for the sake of the community in which they dwell) I sincerely and heartily desire to  
see

free farms and farmers reduced to their former state. Neither can I think that any landlords, except those who occupy farms themselves, would have much cause to repine at the reduction of their rents. For, if they be to purchase all the necessaries of life, and choose to keep up the equipage and hospitality of former days, I do not imagine they will find their finances in a much better situation than their fathers were, fifty years ago, under the unimproved rents.

Some have been absurd enough to argue, that the dearness of provisions has been occasioned by the great increase in the number of inhabitants in the kingdom. I am afraid there is little reason to suppose this. If a general taxation were to be made, I apprehend the returns would fall far short of former calculations. We are frequently told of the vast increase of the metropolis; that it is extended to such a size, that the head is grown too large for the body. — It is certain, that London stands upon much more ground than it did forty or fifty years ago. But let it be observed, that London dwindles on the trading side. Splendor and elegance, pomp and luxury, have supplanted temperance and fru-



frugality, trade and industry. Large families were formerly content to live in small habitations: small families now require large and magnificent houses. So that although London be greatly encreased on the western side, yet, if we may believe one of the most able calculators \* of the present age, the number of inhabitants is less than it was fifty years ago. If, therefore, there be any truth in that reasoning, (viz.) The head is grown too large for the body, it rather proves that the body is wasted, than that the head is increased.

Many horses are kept for the turf, and many horses and dogs are kept for sporting in the field, which may be well spared; and the value of the oats and oatmeal which they devour, may be much more charitably, and more properly, bestowed upon our poor fellow creatures. And those loose and drunken fellows, who are kept at a great expence to take care of them, and to follow them, would be much more profitably employed in some manufacturing trade.

Many regulations might likewise be made, as to the mode of selling grain. The far-

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\* Dr. Price.

mers may be more effectually restrained from selling by sample ; thus keeping up an appearance of scarcity in the midst of plenty. The mealmen, likewise, in the distant parts of the kingdom, who buy grain in large quantities, in order to sell it out in flower, may be proper objects of notice. These, together with many other things requiring redress or amendment, would probably soon want but little regulation, at least, they may be altered or varied, as our internal policy may require. If we can but once get to the root of the evil, these other causes of complaint would soon vanish of themselves ; at least, they would be rectified by a little proper attention.

Our country has, of late years, been almost a waste of corn, if I may use that expression, a granary for neighbouring kingdoms. If we would but keep our corn at home, it is likely we may keep our artificers at home likewise. France may, perhaps, no longer supplant us in our manufacturing trade, and maintain our artisans abroad with the produce of this country.

In a late debate it was urged, we are told, by an honourable gentleman, “ that a free  
 expor-

exportation, and bounties on exportation, were the only means to make a nation great and opulent; that it hath been already proved in this country, and, if it had not, Holland was the strongest proof of the amazing advantages arising from such policy." — I can by no means think, that the truth of the above maxim hath been proved in this country; and, as to Holland, previous to any argument respecting that country, to be applied to this, it would have been highly proper to set forth the proportional value of money and manufactured commodities; the price of labour, and the price of provisions: for these matters may so much vary, in different states and kingdoms, as to render exportation very convenient and profitable to one state, and very prejudicial and ruinous to another. But, without entering into such a discussion of particulars, it may be observed, that the greatest part of the grain, which we receive from Holland, is oats. The natural soil of Holland is peculiarly adapted to that sort of grain; the communication between almost all the several towns in that country, by water, causes but a few horses to be necessary for travelling,

or conveying merchandize from one place to another: and that careful and industrious people hath no taste or relish for that *abuse* of horses, too much in fashion in this nation.

If the inhabitants of France do not *choose* to get as much corn, as is necessary for their own consumption; or, if by unkindly seasons, or bad harvests, they should fail in their crops, and, at the same time, we should be blessed with more fruitful returns, so as to be in a condition to help them, there is no doubt, but they would be glad to send for as much corn as they should want (without the temptation of a bounty) and to pay a sufficient price for it: but to turn the channel of publick trade regularly and constantly that way;—to encourage and promote this, to the neglect and even the ruin of our manufactories, does, I confess, appear to me to be the strangest policy, that ever was adopted by any wise or understanding people.

It is true, the ports are now stopt from the exportation of grain; but the store-houses in those ports, I fear, are not yet empty: the merchants will be unwilling to sell out  
their



their grain here, as long as they have any chance of sending it abroad upon the former terms.

Indeed, although that pernicious act of bounty were taken off entirely, and for ever, it is possible we may not feel all the good effects of it in an instant. The nation has been for many years much drained of corn : and, it is to be feared, that, notwithstanding the prohibition, large quantities have, at certain times, been sent abroad. Besides, as the mischief came on by insensible degrees at first, so we cannot expect it to be cured on a sudden.

I am aware of an objection of real weight, which may be made to the foregoing scheme, confessedly tending to reduce the quantity of corn sown in the kingdom. It is certain, that according to the bounty scheme, we should never be in much danger of an absolute famine. However unfruitful the harvest might be, the great quantity sown (provided the ports were to be occasionally shut up from exportation) would preserve us from a famine, to which we should certainly be more liable, if tillage were reduced within a narrower compass.

But

But this inconvenience and danger may surely be provided against by the wisdom of parliament; either by establishing public granaries in every county, to be filled in times of plenty and cheapness, upon some such plan as is now in use in Switzerland;\* or by such other means as may appear to our rulers and legislators better and more effectual.

The author of this treatise, is by no means sanguine or warm in espousing any sentiments, nor is he wedded to any opinion. What he has written, is that which has long appeared to him as the substance of the principal causes of a general calamity. If any one shall think his conjectures to be ill-founded, and shall offer any thing to the public, which may rather tend to relieve the general distress of the poor, he will heartily wish him success, and will gladly concur with him, as far as may be in the power of a plain man of a moderate understanding.

The great council of the nation has now this very serious and melancholy affair before them. To them the poor with anxious concern look up. From them, with the blessing

\* See Addison's Travels.

sing and assistance of Almighty God, and under the kind auspices of their gracious Sovereign, they hope for relief; which, if they shall obtain, they will consider them (next to their king who was graciously pleased to recommend this matter to their consideration) as their protectors, and their deliverers from the worst and most grievous of all temporal evils, BODILY WANT.

That the Almighty may direct and prosper all their endeavours to this end, is the sincere and earnest prayer of

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 temporal evils, POORLY WORTH.

That the Almighty may direct and pro-  
 tect all their endeavours to this end, is the

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